



NOAA Teacher at Sea
Kazu Kauinana
Onboard NOAA Ship OSCAR ELTON SETTE
May 8 – May 23, 2006

Mission: Fisheries Survey
Day 2: Wednesday, May 10, 2006

Weather Data from Bridge

Latitude: 23-28.0 N
Longitude: 165-45.0 N
Visibility: 10 nm
Wind direction: 078
Wind speed: 22 kts
Sea wave heights: 2-3'
Swell wave heights: 5-6'
Seawater temperature: 25.2 c
Sea level pressure: 1020.6
Cloud cover: 1/8, altostratus, cumulus

Science and Technology Log

Today was a repeat of the last two days: CTD sampling and cetacean watch or marine mammal search. There were no sightings today because of the choppy water conditions until we got closer to the French Frigate Shoals. As we approached the atoll the bird sightings increased and surface fish, like flying fish, became more abundant. A large Mahi-mahi was seen swimming on the surface next to the boat and added to the rising excitement. No land could be seen, but rolling surf over shallow reefs appeared and beautiful turquoise blue streaks interrupted the dark blueness of the ocean. We looked through the "Big Eye" binoculars at a line of surf surrounding what looked to be a sliver of sand and sure enough, it was a sand spit, and there were three Hawaiian Monk Seals basking in the sun. We were exhilarated!

We reached our destination for the day, which is in a protected area just south of the French Frigate Shoals. We will spend the night here and tomorrow morning I will help transport the research team to Tern Island. This will be our first drop off. The researchers are excited and to top it off, it is almost a full moon.

We arrived at our destination a couple of hours before sunset so the ship maneuvered over a seamount where the depth was about 600 feet and the fishing crew did some bottom fishing. They used Hydraulic fishing reels with a 1000-foot line capacity, 3 to 4 hooks per line, 8-pound lead weights, and squid for bait. Very efficient! They landed eight Onaga, the largest about 5lbs.

Personal Log

I attended a meeting this morning for the Mammal Watch team. An interesting issue was raised concerning the declining Hawaiian Monk Seal population, numbering now at only about 1000, and the relationship to shark predation. For some unknown reason, male seals were killing pups and the carcasses were attracting sharks. Sharks are now stalking new areas where pups are more vulnerable and may be affecting the population. What species of sharks, how many, and what to do about them are questions that must be resolved. Enter in the Hawaiian Shark Aumakua cultural factor and the issue becomes even more complex. Some Hawaiians believe that sharks are ancestral guardian spirits and should not be destroyed, but that may lead to the end of the seals. And even if conservationists are allowed to kill sharks to protect the seals, the Question is "should we really be interfering in the balance of nature and would it work?" I was surprised to hear that the seal population is reducing at an alarming rate; I thought it was increasing. Anyway, these are just some more world problems to keep you up at night.

Malama Pono, Kazu